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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

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SUBJECT: STAFFDEL SIMPKINS ENGAGES ON RESTORE ORDER

REF: (A) HARARE 928 (B) HARARE 760

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i., Eric T. Schultz under Section 1.
4 b/d

Summary

¶11. (C) On a visit to assess and discuss the effects of Operation Restore Order, Majority Staffer Gregory Simpkins and Minority Staffer Pearl-Alice Marsh from the House of Representatives International Relations Committee (HIRC) traveled to Harare and Bulawayo, July 2-6. The staffdel saw first hand the devastation in former settlements and high-density suburbs. In meetings with government officials, they expressed outrage over the human rights violations surrounding Restore Order. In his meeting with them, Minister for State Security Didymus Mutasa took credit for the operation, expressed no remorse at the plight of its victims, and showed no interest in reengagement with the U.S. Reserve Bank (RBZ) Governor Gideon Gono said the operation had been carried out without proper consultation but had his support. He desired engagement from the West in restoring Zimbabwe's economy.

¶12. (C) In meetings with opposition and civil society, the staffdel expressed the warmly welcomed message that the United States was aware of their struggle and continued to support their efforts. MDC officials emphasized the need for continued U.S. support, including encouraging Nigeria and South Africa to increase pressure on Mugabe. They said that Operation Restore Order had created unrest within ZANU-PF but that the time might not be right for Zimbabweans to rise up in peaceful protest. However, the MDC was taking steps to ready the people for that moment. Bishops Trevor Manhanga and Patrick Mutume said that the churches were trying not to be political but that all deplored Operation Restore Order and were speaking out about it. The staffdel suggested to the Bishops, the MDC and others in the opposition that it was important to engage with U.S. religious leaders, especially African-Americans. They added that Congressman Payne might consider a trip to Zimbabwe in the near future. End Summary.

Staffdel Agenda

¶12. (C) In Harare, the staffdel met with Government officials Didymus Mutasa and Gideon Gono and several MDC officials. They spoke with Jonathan Moyo (septel). They met with Catholic Bishop Patrick Mutume and Evangelical Bishop Trevor Manhanga. They spoke with UN special envoy Anna Tibaijuka and other UN officials (ref A). The staffdel also attended a number of other meetings and events. They attended a church service the Fountain of Hope Church, an evangelical church, and met with congregants afterwards to discuss with citizens the U.S. interest in Zimbabwe. They visited Porta Farm, a settlement area on the outskirts of Harare that had been destroyed by Operation Restore Order. They spoke with businesswomen in Harare and University of Zimbabwe Economics professor Tony Hawkins about the effects of Operation Restore Order on the economy. They attended a roundtable discussion with human rights and HIV/AIDS NGOs about the human effects of Restore Order. They also spoke with reporters from the Daily Mirror, the Standard, and ZimOnline.

¶13. (C) In Bulawayo (septel), the Staff Delegation met with activists from Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA) and MDC MP David Coltart. They also visited a church providing assistance to the displaced and one of the destroyed settlements, escorted by officials from World Vision.

Mutasa on Restore Order and International Relations:
Leave Us Alone

¶14. (C) Minister for State Security (and fifth-ranking Politburo member) Didymus Mutasa proudly told the staffdel in his office on July 5 that he was among those principally responsible for the GOZ decision to move forward with

Operation Restore Order. He showed no remorse for the suffering the operation had caused. Recounting familiar purported justifications, he said the operation was necessitated by illegal activities (money-changing, prostitution, robbery) stemming from areas of illegal construction and asserted that the operation had been successful in stemming the national crime rate. He dismissed reports of hundreds of thousands displaced and claimed "only 40,000" had lost their homes. Questioned about court rulings that aspects of Restore Order were illegal, he said that the courts could do what they wanted, the government would do what it wanted. The operation would continue and the West was welcome to work with the GOZ on reconstruction efforts.

15. (C) The staffdel stressed that Restore Order had set back prospects for improved bilateral relations in the wake of the GOZ's relatively peaceful administration of elections in March. Queried about GOZ views on bilateral relations with the United States, Mutasa said he was not interested in engaging with the USG or in soliciting any bilateral assistance. He asserted that the USG consistently applied a double standard to Zimbabwe that was evidence of its intent to effect regime change. Why did the USG speak out about dead babies in Zimbabwe and not about the "tens of thousands of babies" it had "murdered" in Iraq? The GOZ wanted only two things from the USG: more honest public statements about Zimbabwe and to be left alone. He said he would welcome the opportunity to explain Zimbabwe to Americans but did not care to be removed from the travel sanctions list. The GOZ understood the USG perfectly but the USG did not understand the GOZ; in that vein, he invited the staffdel to visit his farm so they could learn more for themselves. He said he was polite to them only because they were black and despite the fact that they were tools of President Bush. The staffdel stressed that the United States was not implacably opposed to ZANU-PF; its concerns revolved around process, not personalities or choosing parties.

16. (C) Responding to the staffdel's questions about growing African concern about Zimbabwe and the reported visit of an AU envoy, Mutasa claimed that African governments increasingly were being bought off by America and Britain, who were out to destroy all governments that came from liberation movements. In particular, the GOZ had "no regard" for the Nigerians, who were largely responsible for crime in Zimbabwe and the need for Restore Order. The regime would listen to SADC, which remained staunchly behind the GOZ (except perhaps Botswana, he allowed), but not the rest of Africa.

Gono: Central Bank Still Seeking Re-Engagement

17. (C) In a rambling presentation in his office on July 5, Reserve Bank (RBZ) Governor Gideon Gono told the staffdel that Restore Order had been undertaken without adequate consultation, notice, or "communication of vision." The GOZ, especially the RBZ, was remedying that now as his bi-monthly meetings with "all stake-holders" attested. For its part, the RBZ was supportive of Restore Order, in part to steer informal economic activity toward the formal sector and in part because it could not be seen to condone corruption. The staffdel reiterated Restore Order's negative ramifications for any prospective Zimbabwean rapprochement with the West and urged that it be ceased.

18. (C) Asked by the staffdel how the country would recover economically and at what cost, Gono recounted familiar measures advanced in his May monetary policy statement, such as export subsidies and concessionary loans in the agricultural sectors (ref B), and purported confidence-building measures (grandly named new "operations" that are thin on details and resources) in the wake of Restore Order. The RBZ was deploying highly-paid staff throughout the country to work with provincial governors and to be his "eyes and ears." He shared a copy of his five-page charge to them, which instructed them on comportment but said nothing about their objectives. Gono emphasized that restoring Zimbabwe's economy was a mammoth task that ultimately would require international reengagement; he intended to build a platform to support that reengagement. The staffdel noted that the GOZ's execution of economic policy seemed at odds with Gono's often more orthodox, market-oriented rhetoric. In response to staffdel inquiries about his rumored attempted resignation, he stressed he would never resign but would never refuse to be fired either.

MDC Seeks Continued U.S. Support

19. (C) On July 5, MDC MPs Welshman Ncube (also party Secretary-General), Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga (party

Secretary for Foreign Affairs), Nelson Chamisa (party Youth

SIPDIS

Wing Chair), Job Sikhala, and Tendai Biti (party Secretary for Economic Affairs), asked for continued U.S. support and said Operation Restore Order had weakened the government. There was rising internal unrest within the ruling ZANU-PF party, linked to the succession struggle but also a result of the government's crackdown on the poor, which was unpopular with many in the party. Misihairabwi claimed that a third faction was forming within ZANU-PF that intended to draft former Finance Minister Simba Makoni to challenge the Mujuru and Mnangagwa factions for party leadership.

¶10. (C) Simpkins asked why the people of Zimbabwe were not rising up in protest. MP Job Sikhala said he had tried to organize peaceful resistance in his constituency of St. Mary's (part of the mammoth high density suburb of Chitungwiza) but that it had failed in the face of overwhelming Government intimidation. Misihairabwi noted that in many countries people had put up with decades of repression before reaching a critical moment where resistance was possible. The MDC realized it had to build up a level of confidence within the people for them to reach that critical moment. The MDC was working on reshaping its approach to the regime and was planning unspecified measures to step up democratic resistance. The MDC continued to need external support but Zimbabweans had to step up and take action and learn from peaceful uprisings in other countries.

¶11. (C) Simpkins said that Operation Restore Order was clearly systematic abuse and he did not understand why the international community, especially Africa, did not challenge Mugabe. The MDC MPs responded that SADC could only be effective in pressuring Mugabe to change if South Africa's position on Zimbabwe changed. Ncube said there was genuine unhappiness about Zimbabwe in other SADC countries but that they would follow South Africa's lead. He said that, while he understood other strategic interests governed U.S. relations with these countries, the U.S. should use its influence with South Africa and Nigeria to put more pressure on Zimbabwe. He said it was also important for the U.S. to continue to support democratic elements in Zimbabwe. Chamisa singled out support for Voice of America as key. The group said that Western governments had been too timid in their criticisms of misgovernance in Africa because leaders like Mugabe would always play the racial card. Marsh agreed that the twin specters of colonialism and racism had neutralized criticism of the GOZ in the Congressional Black Caucus. She said that the African-American community in the U.S. would be outraged by the staffdel's report and that there was a need for the opposition and civil society to better engage that community, especially African-American religious leaders. She added that Congressman Payne was reconsidering a trip to Zimbabwe.

Bishops

¶12. (C) On July 5, the staffdel met with Bishops Patrick Mutume (Catholic) and Trevor Manhangwa (Evangelical), who spoke about Operation Restore Order and the role of religious institutions in dealing with the country's political turmoil. Marsh said she had hoped that, after the flawed but improved March elections, the GOZ would next move toward reconciliation with civil society and the opposition and did not understand the GOZ's motives. The Bishops said that the Government's actions in Operation Restore Order were showing people that the Government could target anyone, not just white farmers. Mutume said the churches had tried not to be political but that the Catholic Church had started issuing pastoral letters protesting the operation. Manhangwa said Mugabe was not quite ready to attack the churches directly but that it was clear he wanted to control them as evidenced by the NGO bill, which would classify churches doing humanitarian work as NGOs and subject them to the same intense scrutiny as human rights NGOs. They said that Mugabe was not easily subject to influence from outsiders but that the churches, shuttle diplomacy might eventually work on someone who had influence with Mugabe. The staffdel emphasized the need for the Bishops to reengage with religious leaders they had previously met in the United States and offered their support in making those reconnections.

Comment

¶13. (C) The staffdel's meetings with ruling party and opposition officials and civil society offered a window into the activities and motives of Zimbabwe's key political players. Meetings with government officials underscored that the GOZ remains apparently uninterested in reengagement with the U.S. on political issues, despite interest by Gono and

others in the ruling party (who remain uninclined to speak out) in rapprochement with the West. Civil society and opposition officials enthusiastically received the StaffDel's message that the U.S. was aware of the plight of ordinary Zimbabweans and had not given up on them.

¶14. (U) The StaffDel did not have the opportunity to clear this message.
SCHULTZ